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STANDING COMMITTEES:

Natural Resources, Energy and Water, chairman; Parks, Fish and Wildlife; Land Use and Planning

SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

Joint Task Force on Rural Land Use and Economic Development; Western Legislative Forestry Task Force, past chairman; Select Committee on Forest Resources

Senator Bob MORTON

"Serving the 7th Legislative District is an honor and a privilege. To best serve you, I must hear your thoughts, so please do not hesitate to contact me."

Dear neighbors,

Happy New Year!!!

The legislature begins its short, 60-day legislative session on Monday, Jan. 12. While I have been busy at home, traveling the district, and working on legislative issues while the legislature is not in session, I look forward to returning to Olympia to address some of our district's pressing needs.

As always, I look forward to working with our local governments to address such issues as safety concerns due to the prohibition of cougar trapping, the listing of Lake Roosevelt as a federal Superfund cleanup site, and the ability for citizens' advisory committees to effectively do the jobs they were appointed by government to do, without any bureaucratic hang-ups.

The short session also brings with it work and approval on a supplemental state budget. I do not expect much of a dust-up over the supplemental budget as state revenues, although still lagging, remain rather steady. This will give the legislature more time to address other pressing issues.

As always, it is an honor and privilege to represent you in Olympia. To best serve you, I must hear your thoughts. If you have any questions, comments, concerns, or would like to visit Olympia during session, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Cordially,

Bob Morton

7th District State Senator

STATE GENERAL FUND BUDGET

The state general fund is the largest single fund within the state budget. It is the principal state fund supporting the operation of state government. All major state tax revenues are deposited into this fund.

Public school funds are the largest single state general fund program. It includes state support for Kindergarten through 12th grade education.

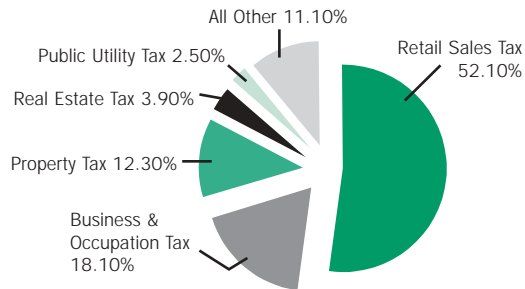
Higher education spending includes funding for six public universities, 34 community and technical colleges, and financial aid to nearly 288,000 students attending both state-supported and private colleges each year.

Human service funds provide medical, social and income assistance to citizens in need through the Department of Social and Health Services. It also includes spending for the Department of Corrections and Department of Health.

Where does state general fund money come from?

Retail Sales Tax	\$11 billion
Business & Occupation Tax (B & O)	\$3.8 billion
Property Tax	\$2.6 billion
Real Estate Tax	\$0.8 billion
Public Utility Tax	\$0.5 billion
All Other	\$2.4 billion
Total	\$21.1 billion

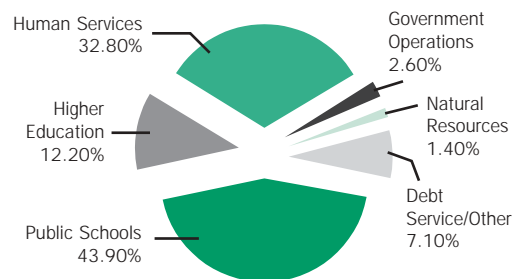
2001-2003 Sources of State General Fund Revenue



How are these funds spent?

Public Schools	\$9.9 billion
Higher Education	\$2.7 billion
Human Services	\$7.4 billion
Government Operations	\$0.6 billion
Natural Resources	\$0.3 billion
Debt Services/Other	\$1.6 billion
Total	\$22.5 billion

2001-2003 General Fund-State Expenditures



Source: Senate Ways and Means, "A Citizen's Guide to the Washington State Budget"

Advisory committees concerned and confused

Recently, several watershed citizen advisory committee members from our area came to me concerned and confused over the advisory process. They are concerned about their lack of access to pertinent information and confused about their requirement for a consensus before they can act on certain issues.

Information

Without the appropriate information, how can we expect our advisory committees to make educated decisions? That is the problem that our watershed advisory committees are running into with the Department of Ecology (DOE). Stevens, Okanogan and Pend Oreille county watershed planning advisory committees have complained that DOE is not forthcoming on requests for pertinent information, resulting in frustration and lost productivity.

Requirements for action

Consensus making has also been a sticking point for these advisory committees. What is consensus? Is it a majority? Is it unanimity?

Margaret Thatcher quote on consensus

"The process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies in search of something in which no one believes, but to which no one objects; the process of avoiding the very issues that have to be solved, merely because you cannot get agreement on the way ahead. What great cause would have been fought and won under the banner, 'I stand for consensus'?"

Roadblocks like government's unwillingness to work with citizens appointed, by government, to advisory boards and requirements of "consensus," are the exact things that deter citizens' involvement in government and stifle citizens' trust in government.

SUPERFUND AT LAKE ROOSEVELT IS OVERKILL

Anyone who has lived in Eastern Washington recognizes the myriad of uses for the Columbia River. It's home to migrating fish. Its water is agriculture's lifeblood. It is a highway for commerce as barges with wheat and other products travel upstream and downstream. From dams like Grand Coulee, it provides electricity for our homes, farms and factories.

But responsibility for the Columbia River doesn't belong to any one nation. Waters of the mighty Columbia that flow into Lake Roosevelt, the giant reservoir behind Grand Coulee, come from sources originating in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Alberta, British Columbia (B.C.), and Washington, comprising the Columbia Basin. We share taking care of it for generations to come.

Over the years, those on both sides of the border have polluted the Columbia River. Resolving environmental concerns around Lake Roosevelt could be a model for collaboration between our two nations, the provinces, and the states.

The effort to improve the water quality of the river, and in particular Lake Roosevelt, was actually started in 1991, a joint effort by the National Park Service (NPS), Tri-County Health Department, tribal agencies, and Citizens for a Clean Columbia. These groups participated in forming the Lake Roosevelt Water Quality Council, with a \$20,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and administered by the Washington State Department of Ecology. This council drafted strict conditions for the river which included:

- development of a Water Quality Management Plan,
- with B.C. Ministry of Environment to address the phaseout of slag deposits in the river,
- upgrading equipment at the pulp mill for chlorine-free use, and
- upgrading Trail City sewage treatment plant to prevent the continued discharge of raw sewage into the river.

The 1996 Water Quality Management Plan, as prepared by WSU and adopted by the NPS, resulted in a steady improvement of the river self-cleansing. Further assurance of cleaning is evident that there has been no evidence of human health problems or any imminent health risks.

Instead of jumping to subject an already-economically depressed area of our state to the stigma that follows the Superfund cleanup process, impacting tourism, recreational opportunities and overall economic development, we should see what our local communities can accomplish first.

The need is to continue cooperative monitoring of the river by the NPS, Washington state, B.C., and federal agencies of Canada and the United States. Listing Lake Roosevelt as a superfund site is overkill in lieu of the success of the NPS Water Quality Management Plan for the natural self-cleansing of the river since 1996.

Resolving environmental concerns around Lake Roosevelt could be a model for collaboration between our two nations, the provinces, and the states.

WATER

For holders of water rights, current law governing the use of water creates a great deal of uncertainty and encourages waste so a water right is not lost.

This session, I will once again work on legislation that will bring certainty to water rights by freezing the Department of Ecology's authority to declare an individual's water right forfeited or relinquished if that water right is not used in a certain span of time.





OUR STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

is closed for renovation. Although the building itself is a draw for many during the legislative session, I would encourage anyone who is interested in visiting Olympia to do so. I always make time for visitors from the district and would enjoy very much seeing a friendly face from back home.

Sen. Bob Morton

2004 Pre-Session Newsletter



COUGARS

I will pay particularly close attention to animal trapping legislation this session.

Specifically, I will propose a bill that would allow Okanogan, Ferry and Stevens counties to address the resurgence of cougars. Since the statewide trapping ban took effect, these mountain lions have become a greater threat to our children, livestock and our family pets, and are getting more and more comfortable entering inhabited areas.

Bob Morton
WASHINGTON STATE SENATOR • 7th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
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